

AFAR

There's So Much to Do in Peru Beyond Visiting Machu Picchu

From exploring a coastal city to indulging in Amazonian cuisine, there's plenty to do in Peru.

By [Marianne Perez-Fransius](#)

• May 01, 2023



Lima, the capital of Peru, is one destination to put on your list beyond Machu Picchu.

Photo by Creators/Unsplash

For many people coming to Peru, [Machu Picchu](#) tops their must-do list. And while the Incan citadel is [worth a visit](#) (keep in mind the daily limit of 4,044 visitors), the country offers a breadth of experiences—geographical, cultural and culinary—that merit exploring. From the Amazon rain forest to the country's coastal capital, here are six must-visit places in Peru that are well worth a spot on any traveler's Peru itinerary.

1. Explore Lima

Lima is an opportunity to explore contemporary Peru. The coastal neighborhood of Barranco offers art galleries, terroir-focused coffee roasters, and great shopping. Maria Eugenia de Aliaga, manager of [destination management company Tropic DMC](#), recommends shops like [Kuntur Huasi](#) for traditional crafts and [Neo Concept Store](#) for its edgy Peruvian fashion, art and housewares. For exceptional dining, Aliaga likes [Merito](#) and [Siete](#) for their refined cuisine, and shorter waiting lists than their more famous cousins, Central or Astrid y Gastón.

For an overview of Peruvian art history, check out the [Museo de Arte de Lima](#), a space focused on a “panoramic” collection of Peruvian art—covering over 3,000 years—with guided tours by the museum’s curators.

Where to stay

- **Book now:** [Hotel B](#)

The 20-room (4 alcoba rooms, 10 aposentos, and 6 ateliers) [Hotel B](#), a Relais & Châteaux property, is housed in a Belle Epoque mansion in Barranco.



Pachamanca involves cooking with hot stones.
Photo by Arturo Lopez Llontop/Shutterstock

2. Go on a cultural or natural excursion in the Sacred Valley

Between the city of Cusco and Machu Picchu, the Sacred Valley has been inhabited by Indigenous communities for at least 1,500 years. “Visitors often overlook the Sacred Valley and go straight from Cusco to Machu Picchu. But there is so much to do: cultural activities, adventure outings, crafts, and more,” says Patricia Monahan, chief world explorer at travel agency [Our Whole Village](#). Exploration offerings range from learning about traditional weaving techniques or climbing a via ferrata to reach your lunch spot at the dizzying [Sky Lodge](#), where travelers can sleep in transparent dining capsules and sleeping pods anchored to the mountainside.

For an unforgettable culinary experience, try a class for *pachamanca*, a traditional style of cooking using a buried clay oven. (Classes can be arranged by travel companies [Our Whole Village](#) and [Tropic DMC](#).) While the meal is cooking, prepare a cordial liqueur infused with local herbs that you’ll be able to savor in the months after your trip.

Where to stay

- **Book now:** [Las Qolqas Eco Resort](#)

[Las Qolqas Eco Resort](#) offers glamping in Ollataytambo, the perfect city for natural exploration along the Patacancha River, in its botanical garden and with easy access to Qapaq Ñan, an Imperial Inca Trail.



Known for its association with the Inca empire, Cusco is a city in the Andes.
Photo by sharptoyou/Shutterstock

3. Check out local products in Cusco

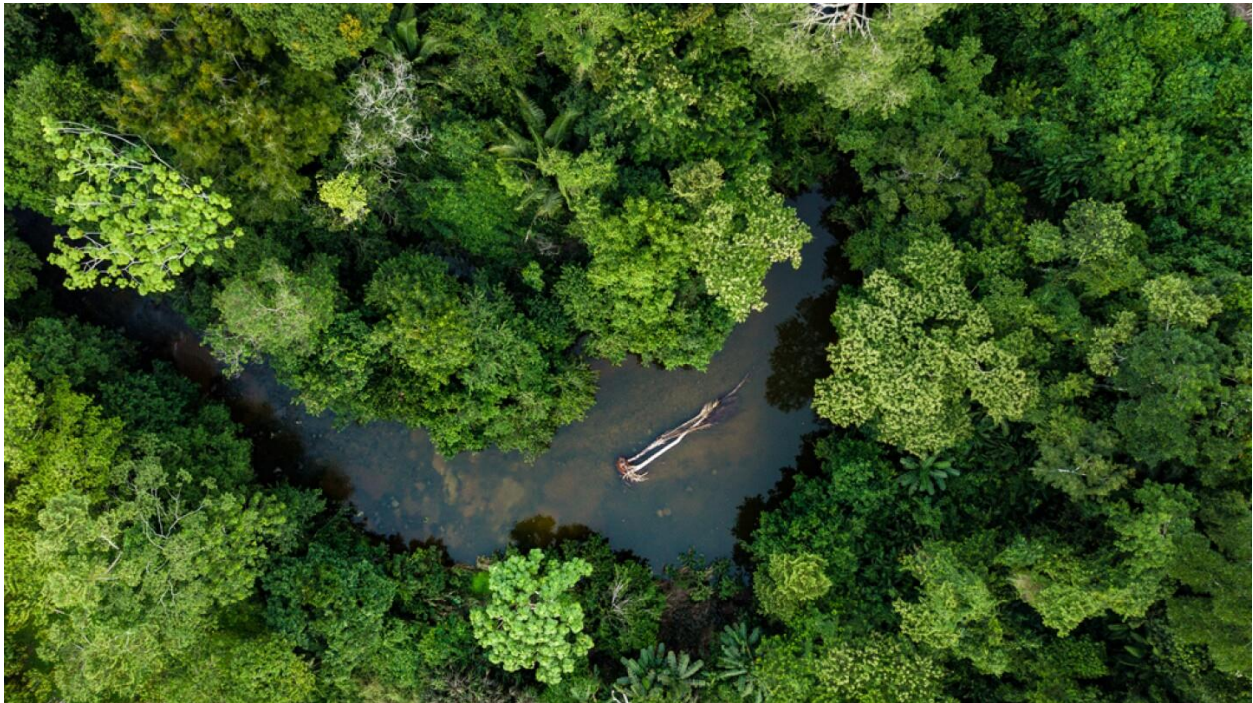
It's worth taking at least a couple of days (although some may want to build in buffer time to adjust to the altitude) to visit this former capital of the Inca empire. Check out the independent design stores on Calle Carmen Alto in the San Blas neighborhood for artisanal and local products. Or head to Mercado de San Pedro for Inca-inspired trinkets and *aguayo* (traditional cloth), as well as alluring local produce like fresh squeezed juices, coca tea (to help with altitude), and fruits and vegetables. Try your hand in a totemic ceramics painting workshop at [Totemiq](#), then see how your piece compares to those in the [Pre-Columbian Art Museum](#).

Within an hour's drive of Cusco, the [two-mile-long Ruta del Barroco Andino](#) illustrates how European baroque architecture was transformed and given uniquely Andean accents—like illustrations of hummingbirds and Indigenous plants—in the three Jesuit churches along this route.

Where to stay:

- **Book now:** [Hotel Los Portales](#)

Located within walking distance to the Qorikancha Incan temple and other historical sites, [Hotel Los Portales](#)'s central location is hard to beat.



Peru is one of nearly 10 countries where you can explore the Amazon rain forest. Photo by [qualtaghvisuals/Shutterstock](#)

4. Search for wildlife in the Amazon rain forest

Often overlooked are the [60 percent](#) of Peru's national territory in the Amazon rain forest and its biodiversity. Peru has more than [4,000 known butterfly species](#); you can see many of them at the [Butterfly House](#). Nature walks and boat excursions can be arranged by lodges like InkaTerra and [Rainforest Expeditions](#). Native Amazonian cuisine like *paiche* (an Amazonian fish) and *juane* (rice- and meat-stuffed bijao leaves steamed in clay pots) are not to be missed.

Where to stay

- **Book now:** [InkaTerra Hacienda Concepcion](#)

[InkaTerra Hacienda Concepcion](#) has its own guides with intimate knowledge of the Peruvian rain forest and a 439-acre private ecological reserve to boot. The property includes a five-room main lodge and 25 private cabanas. It's five miles down the river from Puerto Maldonado and only accessible by canoe. Learn

about the local flora and fauna, including howler monkeys, caimans, and giant river otters.



El Misti is a dormant volcano visible from the town of Arequipa.
Photo by Megan Kotlus/Unsplash

5. Dive into the architecture and foods of Arequipa

Known as the White City for its white volcanic stone ashlar architecture, Arequipa has a mix of protohispanic, baroque and neo-classical architecture, condor sightings, and accessibility to the Misti volcano that make it an appealing place for both culturally inclined and adventurous travelers. When dining in the city, be sure to sample the *picanterías*: “They’re family-style establishments with communal tables. Food is served in big pots, placed right on the table,” says Hugo Lara, who used to run a Peruvian catering business in the United States. Dive into foods like *chaque* (tripe and meat stew) and *ocopa arequipeña* (potatoes in a creamy, spicy sauce with hard-boiled eggs), which Lara says are a bit spicier than other Peruvian foods. “It’s worth exploring because unlike ceviche and pisco sour, this cuisine is hard to find abroad.”

Where to stay

- **Book now:** [Cirqa](#)

A converted monastery, 11-room [Cirqa](#)'s luxurious design and taste are far from monastic, with updated sillar stone architecture. This property is owned by Relais & Châteaux.



Titicaca Lake is on the border of Peru and Bolivia.
Photo by Jeison Higueta/Unsplash

6. Go off grid in Lake Titicaca

Considered to be the cradle of the Incas, the lake is the highest navigable lake at 12,000 feet above sea level. Go off grid and investigate the area with tour companies like Tierra Latina on Lake Titicaca. Explore the floating islands of Uros, made of bamboo, and Taquile, where women weave and men knit. [The highlight is a homestay with an Indigenous family on Amantani island](#), a special way to connect with locals and breathtaking scenery.

Note: According to José Carlos Collazos of national tourism agency PromPerú, travel and tourism in Puno province have returned to normal. The Juliaca Airport re-opened on April 24, 2023.

Where to stay

- **Book now:** [Titilaka](#)

The 18-room [Titilaka](#) combines refined dining with tourism experiences like local folklore festivals and nautical sports.

Link to article: <https://www.afar.com/magazine/things-to-do-in-peru-outside-of-machu-picchu>